



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 88th Legislature

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Every Friday, this newsletter will keep you up to speed on some of the legislation important to Texas Farm Bureau members that Austin staff are following.

Next week's newsletter will begin providing information on bills that have been filed.

Please do not hesitate to contact the appropriate staff with any questions.

The Texas Farm Bureau board of directors adopted the following priorities for the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature.

Property Rights

Oppose unnecessary regulatory authority over the use of private property. Continue to ensure property owners' rights are protected under eminent domain law.

Water

Protect the rights of landowners and agricultural producers to surface water and ground water. Oppose legislation that attempts to take any constitutionally-protected rights to water.

Taxes

Ensure state tax policy does not adversely impact or burden agricultural producers or the agricultural industry. Protect the current state tax provisions that limit the burden on producing food, fiber and other agricultural products for consumers.

Right to Farm

Protect the rights of agricultural producers to engage in normally-accepted agricultural practices on their land.

Transportation

Ensure vehicle, trailer and driver license regulations do not adversely impact or burden agricultural producers or the agricultural industry.

Animal Care

Protect the ability of agricultural producers to utilize generally-accepted, scientifically-proven production practices for livestock, poultry and other animals present on agricultural operations.

Feral Hog Control

Support reasonable chemical controls for feral hogs. Support maintaining all current legal methods of controlling feral hogs.

Truth in Labeling

Support making it illegal to use deceptive labeling of food products to influence consumers to purchase the product.

Rural Connectivity

Support legislative efforts to facilitate the installation of broadband and cellular infrastructure in underserved rural communities.

Sunset Legislation

Ensure that sunset legislation for state agencies related to agriculture or TFB priority issues benefits our members.

Texas Farm Bureau State Legislative Team

Billy Howe, Associate Director of Government Affairs

Issue Areas: Natural Resources (water), Environmental Regulations, Ethics & Elections, and Appropriations

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Billy Howe has advocated in Austin for Texas Farm Bureau since 1999. He spent 18 years in the Austin legislative office. He was state legislative director from 2002 until 2016. He was promoted to associate director of Government Affairs in 2016 and relocated to the Texas Farm Bureau Waco office.

Howe monitors natural resources and environmental issues, including water issues, at the legislature.

Charlie Leal, State Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Right to Farm, Utility Regulation, Energy Regulation, Transportation Infrastructure, and Appropriations

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Charlie Leal joined Texas Farm Bureau as the state legislative director in December 2020. In this role, he is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the state legislative program in Austin to advance Farm Bureau's policies at the state level.

Prior to joining Texas Farm Bureau, Leal served as a budget and policy advisor to Gov. Greg Abbott. Leal has over 17 years of combined policy, legislative, campaign and government relations experience, including experience as staff for members of both the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate.

Joy Davis, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Agriculture, Taxes, Trucking Regulations, Labor, and Appropriations

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Joy Davis is an associate legislative director for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. She joined the organization in March 2020. Davis works in the legislative office in Austin where she monitors issues and legislation pertaining to criminal justice, energy, labor, taxes, transportation, utility regulation, tort reform and related agency appropriations.

Prior to that, she was the campaign manager and chief of staff for State Rep. DeWayne Burns during two legislative sessions.

Blake Roach, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Land Use Regulation, Wildlife, Rural Affairs, Liability, Criminal Justice, and Appropriations

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Blake Roach is an associate legislative director for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. He joined the organization in December 2022.

Prior to joining TFB, Roach served as an appointments manager in the Office of Appointments for Gov. Greg Abbott. In that role, he managed the gubernatorial appointments of various state boards, commissions and agencies. He also worked as a policy advisor in the Budget and Policy Division of the governor's office where he handled agriculture and natural resource policy matters.

Janelle Aello, Legislative Assistant

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Janelle Aello serves as the legislative assistant for Texas Farm Bureau's legislative office in Austin. She joined the Government Affairs division in May 2022.

Janelle grew up on the outskirts of Laredo, in a small community called Ranchitos Las Lomas, where her family owns land, manages a family feed store and an air conditioning business. Janelle received her Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Texas A&M Kingsville.

Cahil Murchison, Legal Intern

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Cahil Murchison is a legal intern for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. Murchison works in the legislative office in Austin where he drafts bill summaries for the Austin Newsletter and assists legislative staff in monitoring legislation related to Texas Farm Bureau priorities.

Murchison received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Leadership and Development from Texas A&M University. He is currently a candidate for a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Texas Tech University School of Law. He is the vice president of the Texas Tech Agricultural Law Association and a staff editor on the Journal of the Energy Law Practitioner.

Murchison plans to pursue a career in energy and property law, focusing on the oil and gas and the wind and solar industries, agricultural issues, and land and water rights.

Victoria Benavides, Legislative Intern

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Victoria Benavides will aid legislative staff in tracking and monitoring bills related to Texas Farm Bureau priorities. She is a junior at Texas A&M University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics and a minor in Agribusiness Entrepreneurship.

At Texas A&M, Benavides is heavily involved in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Council as the Programs Committee chair, Ag-Econ Society vice president and F.I.R.E. Club vice president. After graduation, she plans to attend law school.

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If you would like immediate updates on the action in Austin, follow the Austin Legislative Staff on Twitter.

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